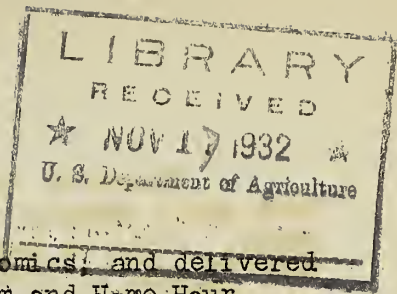


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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

A radio talk by Miss Ruth O'Brien, Bureau of Home Economics, and delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Tuesday, November 1, 1932.

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I had to buy some new blankets the other day and that started me to thinking along this line.

You know the mere buying of a blanket may seem almost a trivial thing and not worth talking about. But it makes quite a little dent in the family pocket-book. And the comfort and sometimes even the health of some member of the family depends a great deal upon its quality.

Then did you ever stop to think how all our purchases go to make up a large and important industry? And this in turn reaches back even to the farmer who produced the raw material? In 1929, the last year for which we have census figures, over 132 million square yards of blanketing were produced in this country. Think of it -- 132 million square yards. Surely it is important that this material be purchased just as wisely and used just as efficiently as possible.

And it is hard to buy a ready-made thing like a blanket intelligently. I often wish more of the blankets shown in the stores were labeled with the facts we women buyers want to know about them. It would help us a lot in making a selection. There are some qualities that a consumer can't determine without a laboratory test and even those of us who have laboratories available can't afford to cut up a perfectly new blanket to learn whether we should buy one like it.

I am therefore glad to know that before long all part-wool blankets are to have labels which will tell us something about their wool content. I understand that a group of leading blanket manufacturers have recently agreed that after December 31, 1932, no finished blanket containing less than 5 per cent wool shall be labeled wool in any way. You know blankets are sometimes called "part wool" when they have only a few yarns of wool in them. Under this new agreement, those that contain between 5 per cent and 25 per cent wool shall be labeled with these words: "part wool, not less than 5 per cent." And the blankets containing more than 25 per cent shall be marked with the guaranteed wool content in percentage. Those containing more than 98 per cent wool can be labeled "all wool." That certainly will help us.

Of course cotton as well as wool blankets have their place. Each of these fibers have their own inherent properties which make them valuable from different standpoints. Cotton launders easily and does not felt or shrink so much as wool. It is stronger than most wools and is inexpensive. Therefore some people prefer cotton blankets. Others may prefer wool. When warmth is the main quality wanted, wool is of course our most desirable fiber.

So-called "part-wool" blankets are made of cotton and wool. The use of very small amounts of wool in blankets made chiefly of cotton is of questionable value. While no research has yet proven how much wool must be used in a part-wool blanket to give it any of the desirable properties of wool, it is generally agreed that there should be at least 25 per cent; or in other words that the blanket should be one-fourth wool.

But of course when you buy a blanket you have to consider other points than whether it is made of all wool, part wool, or cotton. You want to know how strong it is; you want to know its weight; and you want to be sure that the bindings will wear.

Now you can test the strength of a blanket just as you would test the strength of any other fabric. Perhaps you never happened to notice that blanketting is made much like any other fabric, except that the filling is almost always made of large loosely twisted masses of fiber which is later pulled to make the nap. If the manufacturer uses too little fiber and yarns that are too loosely twisted, the strength of the foundation fabric is materially decreased, especially if the blanket is heavily napped. So when you're buying a blanket, push the nap aside and study the foundation fabric the same way you would any other material you are buying. You want a good strong fabric. You can get some idea of the strength of a blanket by pulling it between your hands and holding it before a light and looking through it -- the blanket not the light.

Now about weight of the blanket. Take two blankets of equal size. The heavier one has more fiber in it. The weight indicates relative value. But don't give weight too much attention, since heavy, poorly napped blankets are not so warm as lighter, well-napped blankets.

As for the bindings, just make sure that they are durable.

Well, some day, no doubt, blankets will be labeled with their tensile strength and their heat conductivity. Then we will be better able to select the one that exactly fits our needs. But today we can look to the label for the facts about the size, the kind of fiber, and the weight. Get these facts from the label. Then find out how strong the fabric is by applying the simple tests I have given you; and I think you'll be better satisfied with your purchases.